SECOND LETTER.

A

LETTER

FROM

EARL FITZWILLIAM,

WHO

RECENTLY RETIRED FROM IRELAND,

TO THE

EARL OF CARLISLE:

EXPLAINING THE CAUSES OF THAT EVENT.

THE SECOND EDITION.

DUBLIN, PRINTED:

LONDON, REPRINTED; AND SOLD BY G. G. AND J. ROBINSON, PATERNOSTER-ROW; AND J. DEBRETT, PICCADILLY.

1795.

BRITISH MUSEUM

A

LETTER,

&c. &c.

MY DEAR LORD,

AS I find that the several subjects of crimination that have been urged against me, are settling all into one point; and that, if I am to judge of the declaration and proceedings of Mr. Pitt's friends, from the English Newspapers generally known to speak the language of Government, the grand head of attack is to be—the mischief I have caused by agitating the Catholic Question; I think it essential to trouble you once more with my Defence, and to submit an observation

to you, which did not appear so essential to me at the time I was writing to you last.—I then contented myself with referring you to my correspondence with the Cabinet of England on the Catholic measure:—I shall now myself enter into a review of that correspondence.—It contains a full and adequate vindication of my conduct, and will prove two things:—First, that the Catholic question entered for nothing into the real cause of my recall; and secondly, that from the very beginning, as well as in the whole proceedings of that fatal business, for such I fear I must call it, I acted in perfect conformity with the original outline settled between me and His Majesty's Ministers, previous to my departure from London.

From a full consideration of the real merits of the case, as well as from every information I had been able to collect of the state and temper of Ireland, from the year 1793, I was decidedly of opinion that, not only sound policy, but justice required, on the part of Great-Britain, that the work which was left imperfect at that period, ought to be

compleated, and the Catholics relieved from every remaining disqualification. In this opinion the Duke of Portland uniformly concurred with me; and when this question came under discussion, previous to my departure for Ireland, I found the Cabinet, with Mr. Pitt at their head, strongly impressed with the same conviction. Had I found it otherwise, I never would have undertaken the Government. I at first proposed that if the additional indulgences should be offered from the Throne, the very best effects would be secured by this act of unsolicited graciousness, and the embarrassing consequences, which it was natural to foresee, must result from the measures being left open for any volunteer to bring forward, would be timely and happily avoided: but to this proposal objections were stated that appeared of sufficient weight to induce the adoption of another plan.—I consented not to bring the question forward on the part of Government, but rather to endeavour to keep back, until a period of more general tranquillity, when so many material objects might not press upon the Government; but as the principle was agreed on,

on, and the necessity of its being brought into full effect was universally allowed, it was at the same time resolved that, if the Catholics should appear determined to stir the business, and to bring it before Parliament, I was to give it an handsome support on the part of Government.

I was no sooner landed, and informed of the real state of things here, than I found that this question would force itself upon my *immediate* consideration: Faithful to the system that had been agreed on, and anxious to obtain the object that had been committed to my discretion, I lost not a moment in gaining every necessary information, or in transmitting the result to the British Cabinet: As early as the 8th January last, I wrote to the Secretary of State on the subject: I told him that I trembled about the Catholics;—that I had great fears about keeping them quiet for the Session—that I found the question was already in agitation—that a Committee was appointed to bring forward a Petition to Parliament, praying for a repeal of all remaining disqualifications: I mentioned my

my intentions of immediately using what efforts I could, to stop the progress of it, and to bring the Catholics back to a confidence in Government:—I stated the substance of some conversation I had on the subject with some of the principal persons of the country: it was the opinion of one of these, that if the postponing of the question could not be negociated on *grounds* of *expediency*, it ought not to be resisted by Government; that it should be put off for some time, was allowed to be a desirable thing, but the *principle* of *concession* was, at the same time, strongly insisted on, and forcibly inculcated, as a matter not only wise, but necessary to the public tranquillity.

From the day of the date of this letter, I unremittingly applied myself to the collecting of further information: I had heard that the Committee had prepared an Address to me: before I should receive it, I wished to know the opinion of those whom the Committee called the SECEDERS,—the Noblemen and principal Landed Gentlemen of that persuasion.

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In a letter of the 15th of January, I acquainted the Secretary of State of the result of these conferences, and of the progress of the business, subsequent to my former letter:—I told him that in the absence of the Nobleman who was considered as the head of the Seceders, I had sent for a person of the most tried and acknowledged moderation amongst them, and of the first consequence and property. I found by him, (which the Nobleman above alluded to afterwards confirmed) that he, and every person of his description, were in perfect union with the Committee; that they all decidedly looked to the same object; that they were determined never to lose sight of it; that provided it should be obtained, they had no objection that Mr. Byrne, or the other Members of the Committee, should have the honour of taking the lead in it. I mentioned my having, after this conversation, received the Address; that in my answer, which I transmitted, I had endeavoured to keep clear of all specific engagements whatever; though at the same time, avoiding every thing that could be construed into a rejection of what they were ALL looking to; the repeal of the remaining restrictions,

and,

and, (what comes immediately to the point) I concluded by declaring—that I should not do my duty, if I did not distinctly state it as my opinion, that, not to grant chearfully, on the part of Government, ALL the Catholics wished for, would not only be exceedingly impolitic, but perhaps dangerous; that in doing this *no time was to be lost*;—that the business would be *presently* at hand—and that the first step I took would be of infinite importance;—that if *I received no very peremptory* instructions to the contrary, *I should acquiesce.* I meant—as well *in the time*, as in the mode of proceeding, and the *extent of the demands*;—for, as a *measure* considered generally, I could conceive no necessity of waiting for any new instructions, on which to decide: of this I reminded the Secretary of State, "convinced, I said, as we all were, "of the necessity, as well as fitness of the "measure taking place at no distant period; "I was decidedly of opinion, that it ought no "longer to be deferred." The state of the country required this; and the disposition of the Catholics, among whom hesitation on the part of Government might produce mischiefs to a degree beyond calculation. You will not

forget that all this passed within the first fortnight after my arrival, and before the meeting of Parliament.—Thus early were Ministers in possession of the opinion and determination which, in the exercise of my discretionary powers, I had formed on the subject;—they knew that the question was in agitation—that a Petition to Parliament had been determined on, and was to be immediately presented; they were acquainted with the extent of the Catholic demands;—they knew that it could not be kept back;—that no time was to be lost, and that if I did not receive their instructions to the contrary, I should, in the spirit of the system that had been agreed on, immediately acquiesce to the full extent of the Catholic expectations.

This then was the time for His Majesty's Ministers to come forward with their fears and their alarms, if they had so suddenly changed their minds on the subject; and if they had at length *discovered* that this, which was to be both with their knowledge and consent, a leading measure of my administration, led to consequences "that could not be contemplated without horror

and dismay," this was the time for them to inform me of this change;—they knew that it was my opinion that not a moment was to be lost; and consequently, that, if I did not receive peremptory instructions to the contrary, I was prepared to consent, without an appearance of hesitation, that the measure should go forward:—Did they send me those peremptory instructions?—Did they state to me, as they afterwards did, that it was the unanimous opinion of the Cabinet—that I should stop short;—that I should *abstain from all engagements, or even encouraging language*, in that quarter, until I should receive their further instructions?

Not a word of the kind: my regular correspondence went on; I received frequent letters from the Secretary of State, and not even a hint was thrown out on the subject.

In a letter of the 7th of January, I proposed the removal of Mr. Wolfe, on certain terms of accommodation, in order to make room for Mr. George Ponsonby to act as my Attorney General: this letter went by the same mail with my letter of the 8th, to which

I have alluded above: on the 13th of January, the Secretary of State writes me an answer to this very letter:—He informs me that the King had consented to Mr. Wolfe's peerage, which was one of the terms I had there proposed; and touches lightly upon an objection against another, (that of holding out to Mr. Wolfe the promise of succeeding to a Chief Justice's place) on the supposition that he was to quit his practice at the bar; a supposition, by the way, that never had the smallest foundation.—But not a word on the Catholic question—not a single observation on what I stated so strongly, respecting my fears of not being able to keep it quiet during the Session.

The 2d of February came, and of that date I find a second letter from the Secretary of State on the subject of Mr. Wolfe; but here again he confined himself to that subject alone; and my letter of the 15th of January, which must have been so many days in his hands, was not even noticed.—That letter, to which I so earnestly required, and which in itself called for

for an explicit, an immediate and peremptory answer,—that letter, from which they knew, that if not *timely* instructed, and timely checked, the Catholic question would presently receive from me a chearful acquiescence; yet in the interval, from the receipt of it, till the 2d of February, although he wrote twice on other subjects, he says not a word of the precipitancy with which I was plunging into a matter so big with danger to the Empire; not even a hint that I should proceed with more caution or circumspection in a measure that was to subvert the constitution and establishment in this kingdom: the fact was, that neither he nor the Cabinet entertained at that time any such fears—they then apprehended no such danger. It was another business that opened their eyes to all the mischiefs of my councils;—a business that soon rung such an alarm as brought down upon me that tempest of fears, and terrors, and remonstrances, under which I have sunk.

At the close of the letter of the 15th of January, alluded to above, I had mentioned the dismissal of Mr. Beresford. This intelligence

does not seem to have caused the smallest degree of alarm in the breast of the Secretary of State.

In his letter of the 2d of February, when it appears that he must have received the information for several days, he takes not the least notice of it; and it further appears, from a letter of Mr. Windham's to Lord Milton, that his Grace was equally unacquainted with the alarm which the intelligence of the transaction, conveyed indirectly to Mr. Pitt by Mr. Beresford himself, had caused in that quarter.—However this may have been, the attack upon me was, in the mean time, meditating, although perhaps unknown to his Grace.

This letter of Mr. Windham's was the first intimation I received of the least discontent among my Colleagues in England, at my conduct since my arrival.—The Duke of Portland had, indeed, in one letter, stated some objections about the terms of Mr. Wolfe's removal; and in another about Mr. George Ponsonby's appointment; but nothing that could indicate discontent: but

Mr.

Mr. Windham's letter was soon followed by one from Mr. Pitt on the 9th of February: that gentleman wrote to me to expostulate on the dismissal of Mr. Beresford, and on the negociations with Mr. Wolfe and Mr. Toler. This formed the whole matter of his letter, and to this alone he confined his remonstrances; yet he had a fair opportunity of touching on the measures of my government; but he concluded his letter by making an apology "for interrupting my "attention from the many important consi-"derations of a different nature, to which "all our minds ought to be directed."

The task of bringing forward the Catholic question, he had, it seems, committed to another. By the same mail, and in a letter dated the 8th, the very day before Mr. Pitt had written to me, came a letter from the Secretary of State, touching *at length*, on this important subject, and bringing it, for *the first time*, into play, as a question of any doubt or difficulty with the British Cabinet:—then, as if the question had been started for the first moment between us, as if it never had been

been the subject of any former consultation, plan or arrangement whatever, he writes—of enabling the King's Ministers to form their judgment, as to the *policy*, *expediency*, *safety*, and *necessity* of that measure:—then, as if he had never before heard from me on the subject, he cautions against committing myself by *engagements*, or even by *encouraging language*, (so minute is his Grace) to give my countenance to the immediate adoption of this measure. Then, for the first time, it appears to have been discovered, that the deferring it would be not merely an expediency, or a *thing to be desired* for the present—but "the means of doing a "greater service to the British Empire than it "has been capable of receiving since the "Revolution, or at least since the Union:"—All former opinions, all former discussions, all former agreements, the leading principle of our being all convinced of the necessity, as well as fitness of the measure taking place at no distant period, of which I reminded the Ministers in my letter of the 15th of January—all were forgotten; and he feels it his duty, *for the first time*, in consequence of the

the discussion of this question in the Cabinet *the day before*, to exhort me to use those efforts which I had expressed an intention of trying;—efforts, of the efficacy of which I had expressed the strongest doubts, on the 8th of January, when I first mentioned my intention of trying them—efforts, every hope from which I had relinquished on the 15th, when I warned them of the necessity of immediately giving way, when I earnestly called upon them for peremptory instructions, which if I should not receive, I should acquiesce—Efforts, which they knew, from the whole series of my correspondence, it was impossible ever to attempt, without evident and certain danger.

From this period every thing went on rapidly towards my removal.—From my knowledge of the person I had to deal with, I was resolved myself to bring the business to the real point at issue between us, and to leave him no subterfuge:—Cruelly as the Duke of Portland has treated me, I feel no difficulty to say, that his judgment was deceived before he abandoned me: on

whatever grounds he has suffered himself to be induced to change his former opinions respecting the politics of this country, and the characters and views of its principal personages, he did change those opinions; and, in consequence of that change alone, he has been driven to consent to the measure of my instant recall. But, I was not so deceived: I combined all the circumstances which I have detailed to you in this letter: I perceived immediately the scheme that was laid against me; and I resolved on the only means I saw left, to bring the matter to so speedy an issue as should preserve my honour and vindicate my public character. In my answer to Mr. Pitt, a copy of which I send you, and which I wrote the very night I received his letter, I entered fully into the subject of my dismissals. I stated, as you will see, my reasons for having determined on them, as well as for adhering to them when once resolved on;—reasons, of which, from your knowledge of this country, you will, I am sure, admit the justice: I then put it to himself to determine for me, and the efficacy of my

government:

government:—I left to him to make his choice between Mr. Beresford and me.

The same night, I wrote to the Duke of Portland: I testified my surprise to him that after such an interval of time, and after the various details which I had transmitted to him, advising him of the hourly increasing necessity of bringing forward the Catholic question, and the impolicy and danger of resisting or even hesitating about it, I should now be pressed *for the first time*, to defer the question till some future occasion. I refused to be the person to run the risk of such a determination; I refused to be the person to raise a flame in the country, that nothing short of arms could be able to keep down: I then alluded to Mr. Pitt's letter; appealed to his knowledge of the situation of a Lord Lieutenant; and left him to determine, whether, if he was not to be supported, he ought not to be removed. These letters I wrote on the 14th of February.—Shortly after came two official letters from the Duke of Portland, dated the 16th, in which he enters into a long detail of the various points of view in which the Cabinet wished to have the

question of the Catholics considered: with these came a private letter of his own, dated the 18th. In this his Grace dwells most particularly on the necessity of having information submitted to them on all these points, and a detailed plan of all the additional advantages intended to be conceded to the Catholics: he observes, that if the consideration of this great question could be deferred till the Peace was established, he should have no doubt but that it would be attended with advantages, which perhaps are not to be hoped for in any other supposeable case; but he added (I beg you will attend to this), "that *it was surely going too far,* "*to infer* from any thing that he had said, that "*I was desired to undertake the task of deferring* "*it to that period.* If the Cabinet were to ac- "cede, what they desired was, to be jus- "tified in that accession by a free and im- "partial investigation of facts, of circum- "stances and of opinions; among which, as of "reason, mine would have the most decisive "weight; and as I had expressed a wish to "have the mode considered in England, whilst "it was still within my reach to have it limited "or modified, before the Bill was introduced,

"and

" and before the plan was known to the " Catholics, he wished to have this plan, " and the heads of the Bill, transmitted for " consideration."

If any thing was wanting to confirm me in my opinion, that the Duke of Portland had suffered himself to be compleatly duped, and deceived in this business, a comparison of this letter, with what immediately followed, would be alone sufficient to establish that conviction. At the moment of his writing this letter, there was not " a fact," a circumstance, " or an opinion," that could be transmitted to him, of which he was not in possession. He acknowledges himself, and frequently refers to my letter of the 10th of February, in which he had the plan, wherein every thing that regarded the constitution, the ecclesiastical establishment, and the settlement of property, was stated. He had the Primate's opinion on some ideas that his Grace had suggested. In a letter of mine, dated the 20th, he had still more ample details on these various heads; but for these details, which were to have the most decisive weight, he was not suffered to wait:

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the decision had been already formed before he had called for them. The very day after he had written that letter, in which he had pressed me for more information, he assisted at the denouement of the piece. He assisted at the Cabinet meeting, that unanimously concurred in the necessity of recalling me: and in a letter of the 21st, sums up all the reasons why that measure was deemed necessary, without one dissenting voice, for the very preservation of the Empire. Can any thing be more self-evident; or, in order to account for the real causes of my recall, did it require that this letter should be accompanied as it was by one from Mr. Pitt of the same date; accepting in fact the alternative I proposed to him, declaring himself fully prepared for the event, however he might lament it? It is true, indeed, that for the very first time, he mentions the Catholic business, and declares his concurrence in the general desire of the Cabinet, to prevent any further progress being made in Mr. Grattan's Bill, *till they should receive and consider the information which they thought it their duty to call for*; but by the desertion of all my friends, and by the prospect of my falling alone,

alone, Mr. Pitt was prepared to throw out this, as a matter on which to amuse his Colleagues for the moment, and the public at a future period; while to myself, without allowing a moment's further deliberation, he boldly and peremptorily pronounces on what I had determined to be the point to decide on my Government. On the subject of arrangements, he felt bound to adhere to these sentiments, not only with respect to Mr. Beresford, but to the line of conduct adopted "in so many instances towards the former supporters of "Government; by these sentiments, he must, "at all events, be guided from a regard to the "King's service, and to his own honour, however sincerely he might lament the consequences which must arise from the present "situation."

Need I add any comment on this letter? need I observe to you, that the measure of the Roman Catholics, on which it is now asserted my Administration was determined, is here reserved for future consideration; whilst the subject of Arrangements is finally an dperemptorily decided? At all events, and independent of

of every other consideration, his own honour obliges him not to give way on that subject; and however he laments it, he acquiesces in what I had positively declared to him should be the consequence of such a decision on his part.

Let my friends, therefore, my dear Carlisle, no longer suffer the Catholic question to be mentioned, as entering in the most distant degree into the causes of my recall. Let them listen no longer to that terrifying enumeration of evils and miseries to result to the Empire from a measure which my enemies affect to have considered either as originating with myself exclusively, or as hurried on by me rashly, precipitately, or without consent or consultation:—you have seen, when the dread of these miseries was first conceived, and when the complaint of this want of consultation was first brought forward, had Mr. Beresford been never dismissed, we never should have heard of them, and I should have remained.—But so remaining, I should have been disgraced indeed:—disgraced by the failure of all the measures which I had planned for

for the public welfare, and loaded with all the odium which that man and his connections have entailed upon that government which I was sent to displace. But it will be said, that in proving this point so strongly, I still leave myself open to other accusations, which affect my character, when I avow the earnestness with which I had determined to pull down the power of the Beresfords. I submit to the imputation of wishing to raise the Ponsonbys; it was only a family acquiring consequence, and a family losing it, according to an insinuation of a letter to me from one of the Cabinet. Am I then so little known to my friends? Is it my character in the world that, whilst I pretend the public good, and the King's service, I am insidiously consulting my private interests? and, instead of my country, have only my own connections in view? I think, my dear Carlisle, you would be sorry to see me condescend to enter into the merits of such an accusation.—But by my dismissing Mr. Beresford, I broke my engagements with Mr. Pitt, so he himself states it. I acted, as he pretends in his letter, inconsistently with that principle by which alone the full advantage of the union

 which

which had taken place in England could be extended to Ireland. Would he insinuate, that the union which had taken place in England, precluded every idea of removal? Was there no removal in the War-Office?—None in the Post-Office? None in the Cabinet? Has there been no removal of his friends at the Admiralty? And did Lord Spencer, on his succeeding Lord Chatham, act inconsistently with the spirit of the union, when he required such changes, and the constitution of such a Board, as, judging for himself, should command his confidence? Could what was right and consistent in so many instances, be blameable in mine? Charged with the government of a distracted and discontented country, am I alone to be fettered and restrained in the choice of the persons by whom I am to be assisted? And, rather than indulge me in that single point, even considering it in the light of indulgence, must the Ministers of England boldly face, I had almost said, the *certainty* of driving this kingdom into a rebellion, and open another breach for ruin and destruction to break in upon us? Must I be interrupted in the course of the most unanimous Session of Parliament the country ever had

had seen? Commanding, by my influence, and on the credit of the persons whom I had employed, and I must add, on the satisfaction I had given by one dismissal I had made, supplies and forces beyond every former example; and causing a spirit of union and harmony to succeed to that general discontent and disaffection, as well against the stysem of the former Government in general, as against the war itself; which, at the time of my arrival, manifestly and avowedly pervaded the bulk of the nation. And now, I think, I have sufficiently proved that the Catholic question entered for nothing into the cause of my dismissal; and have shewn that as far as my conduct in Ireland had any thing to do with it, I have traced it to the dismissal of Mr. Beresford. But after all, why are we looking for the causes of my removal in the acts of my Administration here? — We are seeking in vain: the true cause is not to be found among them: the fact is, we must go back to a more distant period. When the Duke of Portland and his friends were to be enticed into a Coalition with Mr. Pitt's Administration, it was necessary to hold out such lures as would make the Coalition palatable, or even possible for

them to accede to. If the general management and superintendance of Ireland had not been offered to his Grace, that Coalition could never have taken place. The sentiments that he had entertained, and the language he had held so publicly for many years back, on the subject, rendered it a point that could not be dispensed with; accordingly it was offered from the beginning of the negotiation; as was also the Home Department of Secretary of State. Ask the Duke of Portland, when he engaged to accept, if he doubted that the office offered to him, was to be entire, and such as his predecessors held it? Ask him, if he was forewarned by Mr. Pitt, that it was to be divested of half its duties, half its importance, and all its character? Ask him if he was apprized, that another Secretary of State was to be made out of the department? and that he was to be left but a joint possessor, with an inmate? Ask him when he accepted the management of Ireland, if he did it under any restrictions whatever? Ask him if he pressed it upon me under any? and if he did not propose and recommend to me to lay myself out immediately, for making such arrangements in the government, as would enable me

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to restore peace, tranquility, and order in the country, and as would reconcile the general mass of the people?

But my dear Carlisle, the instant we had proclaimed our acceptance, the scene began to open: then it was first discovered that the object of all this mighty work was, not to strengthen Administration by an accession of character, but to debase, degrade, and disgrace that character. When the junction was irrevocably avowed and declared, then the pretensions of Mr. Dundas to the continued management of the war were immediately brought forward; and a new office was to be cabbaged out of the Duke of Portland's, and an obvious diminution of his credit and authority was proclaimed. No sooner had I declared my acceptance of the Lieutenancy of Ireland, than delay interposed, and soon doubts and difficulties arose. It is a matter of public notoriety in this country, that Mr. Pitt assured Lord Westmorland, as early as August, that he should not be removed: and I know that I could bring evidence to prove that, in the course of the Autumn, he pointed

out

out my actual successor as the person to succeed my predecessor. No, Mr. Pitt did not wish for our assistance; but knowing the importance we gave to the system then pursuing relative to France, he snatched at the opportunity, and made that the means of disgracing our characters, and rendering us fit for no other service, but to be his vile tools and instruments. He thought that object perfected and complete; then he cared not how soon he turned us adrift, to all the disgrace and contempt it was his expectation and wish should attach upon our characters.——Here then is the clue to all the mystery:—here you see unravelled the real ground of my deposition and attempted disgrace.——To my measures Mr. Pitt has no objection:—I predict that he will adopt them by the medium of my successor.——I am not sure that he will not court the connections I have formed for Government;---for the person for whom he has pretended to contend so strenuously, he has no regard; and I doubt whether he will ever permit him to resume his station at the Revenue Board, though he is entitled to do it without a re-appointment; for, in fact, he has

has never been out of office;—and to get rid of me personally, has been the motive to every thing that has happened relative to Ireland.

I have the glory of being objectionable to Mr. Pitt; I feel it such: my character is not made to be vile and subservient:—he has deposed me—but by it, I have the arrogance to say, he has deposed a faithful servant of the Crown, and a beneficial Governor for the people of Ireland, and a stedfast adherent to the unity of both nations.

Believe me, &c. &c. &c.

March, 1795.

BRITISH MUSEUM

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